**Research Rationale for Early World Language Instruction**

* The age of ten is a crucial time in the development of attitudes toward nations and groups perceived as “other” (Piaget, Lambert and Klineberg, 1967).
* One of the most important factors influencing the development of language proficiency is the amount of time spent in working with the language. When language begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness (Curtain and Dahlberg, 2004).
* “Learning to speak another’s language means taking one’s place in the human community. It means reaching out to others across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Language is far more than a system to be explained. It is our most important link to the world around us. Language is culture in motion. It is people interacting with people.” (Savignon, 1997)
* “Third graders who were taught Spanish for thirty minutes three times per week showed statistically significant gains on their Metropolitan Achievement Test scores on the areas of math and language after only one semester of study” (Armstrong and Rogers, 1997).
* “Ideally, the age for beginning the learning of a second language is at birth. But when considering language learning in relation to schooling, the optimum age for beginning the continuous learning of a second language seems to fall within the span of ages four through eight…In this span of ages, the brain apparently has the greatest placticity and specialized capacity for acquiring speech. This capacity includes the ability to mimic properly all the speech sounds, intonations, and stresses and learn readily all language patterns" (Donoghue, 1968).
* If students attain a high level of fluency in the foreign language, the committee will choose the earliest possible start for the study of the language, maximize the time and intensity of the program at every level, and provide an articulated program that flows across levels without interruption.

ED329126  
Optimal Age Revisited--A Piagetian Perspective. Tsakonas, Frances  
Apr 1990  
The controversy over the optimal age for learning a second language is discussed, examining, from the perspective of Piagetian theory: (1) the argument which suggests that children have an advantage in language learning; and (2) the arguments which states that adults have an advantage in language learning. The first part provides an overview of the short- and long-term studies on child/adult differences that have led to the controversy, and points out some of the problems inherent in carrying out such studies. In part two, the major factors that have been suggested to account for age differences in second language learning are outlined. It is then argued that these factors fail to satisfactorily account for the differences between younger and older learners in both learning rate and ultimate attainment, thus biasing conclusions about optimal age; a resulting "disequilibrium model" of language learning is proposed. This model attempts, through application of the Piagetian concept of equilibration, to find a common ground on which the results of both long- and short-term studies can be examined collectively. It is concluded that determinations of optimal age in second language learning are incidental rather than substantive. A 65-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

EJ465916  
Interaction between Bilingualism and Cognitive Growth. Van Groenou, Meher.  
Montessori Life, v5 n1 p33-35 Win 1993  
The author examines the relationship between young children's use of two languages and their cognitive development. He discusses the simultaneous and sequential acquisition of two languages; theories on cognition and language; and studies on the effects of bilingualism and offers strategies for creating an effective language learning environment for young children.

EJ499481  
Should International Languages Be Part of the School Curriculum? Goossen, Tam.   
Mosaic, v1 n3 p19 Spr 1994  
ISSN: 1195-7131  
A member of the Toronto Board of Education argues that exposure to international languages in elementary school constitutes an important part of a forward-looking, up-to-date educational system. He maintains that the learning of a second or third language has positive social and economic benefits.

EJ465915  
A Second Language in the Classroom; Are We Missing the Boat? Selman, Ruth.  
Montessori Life, v5 n1 p31-32 Win 1993  
In the context of an increasingly interdependent world society, there are benefits to early acquisition of a second language for American children. Benefits cited include the ease of learning a second language at an early age, improved abilities in concept formation, greater cognitive flexibility, and appreciation of cultural diversity. Second language programs in the classroom are also discussed.

ED304872  
An Early Beginning: Why Make an Exception of Languages? Lee, William R.  
Apr 1988.   
In the twentieth century, both the need and the opportunities for acquiring a foreign language have greatly increased. However, even today, foreign language instruction has not been firmly established worldwide as an essential element of basic education. In Great Britain, enthusiasm for foreign language instruction has risen and fallen repeatedly. Currently, there is an acute shortage of trained language teachers. Insularity, coupled with reliance on English in foreign countries, has caused foreign language learning to be neglected. Although the situation is improving, it is worst in the elementary schools, for economic and political reasons. Early second language instruction is desirable for several reasons: (1) it increases the number of years in which the language can be learned at school; (2) young children are able to learn a foreign language and enjoy it, and may be better at learning pronunciation; (3) if the teaching is appropriate, children discover that learning another language is within their capacity, and this knowledge strengthens their motivation; and (4) second language learning reduces ethnocentricity and creates a more international outlook and better understanding of people who speak other languages.

ED278274  
Bilingualism and Cognitive Development: Three Perspectives and Methodological Implications. Hakuta, Kenji; And Others.  
1986. 63p.  
The relationship between bilingualism and cognitive development is explored as an exemplary area in which the disciplinary concerns of cognitive psychology, social psychology, and sociology occur together. A historical review of research shows that many of the apparently contradictory findings about the effects of bilingualism on mental development have stemmed from a failure to distinguish between levels of bilingualism as defined by the three different research orientations. The literature within each of the disciplines is discussed and the implications for a more rigorous definition of bilingualism are outlined, based on research undertaken in a bilingual education program in New Haven, Connecticut. There are 69 references listed.

ED296580  
The Effect of Age on Acquisition of a Second Language for School. Collier, Virginia P.  
1987  
Research on second language learning suggests that age or age-related factors are a major variable in the acquisition of a second language for school. In the early stages of acquisition, older students are faster and more efficient learners, with the advantage of more advanced cognitive development in the first language. This early advantage diminishes after the first year of second language learning for adults, but remains for older children and adolescents. Adolescents past puberty are likely to retain an accent but are capable of developing complete second language proficiency. When schooled only in the second language, students in the 8- to-12-year range on arrival may be the most advantaged learners of school skills in the second language. Older students have less time to make up lost years of academic instruction easily. The effect of age diminishes over time as the learner becomes more proficient in the second language. Differences are generally found through the first five years after arrival. It takes language minority students in any type of program a minimum of four years to reach native speakers' level of school language proficiency and may take eight or more years, depending on a variety of factors.

EJ457645  
Ultimate Attainment in Second Language Acquisition. Birdsong, David.  
Language, v68 n4 p706-55 Dec 1992.  
In the prevailing view of ultimate attainment in second language acquisition, native competence cannot be achieved by postpubertal learners. This study offers convergent experimental evidence that suggests exceptions to this generalization.

EJ415099  
Maturational Constraints on Language Development. Long, Michael H.  
Studies in Second Language Acquisition, v12 n3 p251-85 Sep 1990  
Reviews the second-language research on age-related differences, drawing conclusions regarding learning-age influence on initial acquisition rate and ultimate attainment level; sensitive periods of language development; cumulative age-related loss in ability; and the adequacy of affective, input, and current cognitive explanations for reduced ability.

EJ405461  
Age and Accent in a Second Language: A Reply to James Emil Flege. Patkowski, Mark.  
Applied Linguistics, v11 n1 p73-89 Mar 1990  
Arguments raised against the Critical Period Hypothesis of second language learning are refuted. It is suggested both that sufficient research evidence exists to support the hypothesis and that the hypothesis was not represented accurately or contradicted convincingly in the criticisms.

ED375613  
The Relationship between Starting Age and Second Language Learning.  
Griffin, Glenda Gillespie. May 1993  
A study examined the relationship between the age at which children started second language learning and their achievement by the end on high school. Subjects were 26 native English-speaking private school seniors. Half had begun French language study in grades K-4 (early starters) and half in grades 5-8 (late starters). Language skills were measured using two standardized French language achievement and advanced placement (AP) tests. Statistical analyses of test results indicate no systematic relationship between starting time and achievement test scores, nor any between AP test scores for the early starters. There was a moderate inverse relationship between AP test scores and late starting. Overall, early starting appeared to have very little influence on increasing second language proficiency by the end of high school in this population.